

Occupational Profile: Dental Assistant

GENERAL OCCUPATION DESCRIPTION

Assist dentist, set up patient and equipment, and keep records.

Specific tasks include:

- Prepare patient, sterilize and disinfect instruments, set up instrument trays, prepare materials, and assist dentist during dental procedures.
- Expose dental diagnostic x-rays.
- Record treatment information in patient records.
- Take and record medical and dental histories and vital signs of patients.
- Provide postoperative instructions prescribed by dentist.
- Assist dentist in management of medical and dental emergencies.
- Pour, trim, and polish study casts.
- Instruct patients in oral hygiene and plaque control programs.
- Make preliminary impressions for study casts and occlusal registrations for mounting study casts.
- Clean and polish removable appliances.

Source: O*NET online. <http://online.onetcenter.org>

REQUIRED EDUCATION

As shown in the table (right), 64.5% of surveyed employers required a 2-year degree or the equivalent for this occupation. The remaining 35.5% reportedly required a high school diploma or less. No surveyed employers reported that a 4-year degree was required for this occupation.

Required Education	
Percent of Employers Requiring HS Diploma or Less	35.5%
Percent of Employers Requiring 2-Year Degree or Equiv	64.5%
Percent of Employers Requiring BS Diploma or More	0%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

WAGES

Dental Assistant is generally considered a low to medium-wage occupation, with possibility for wage advancement with experience. This occupation in the Greater Phoenix MSA is paid comparably or slightly lower as compared to the State of Arizona as a whole, or the United States overall.

Location	Pay Period	2005				
		10%	25%	Median	75%	90%
United States	Hourly	\$9.46	\$11.53	\$14.19	\$16.92	\$20.21
	Yearly	\$19,700	\$24,000	\$29,500	\$35,200	\$42,000
Greater Phoenix MSA	Hourly	\$9.63	\$11.84	\$13.97	\$16.26	\$18.50
	Yearly	\$20,040	\$24,639	\$29,072	\$33,837	\$38,499
Arizona	Hourly	\$9.46	\$12.47	\$15.31	\$17.85	\$20.62
	Yearly	\$19,700	\$25,900	\$31,800	\$37,100	\$42,900

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

As shown in the table to right, a comparison of wages for this occupation by State reveals Arizona ranks 14th in terms of wages.

RANK	Location	Median Wage 2005	
		Hourly	Annual
1	Columbia	\$18.35	\$38,200
2	New Hampshire	\$17.70	\$36,800
3	Maine	\$16.84	\$35,000
4	Minnesota	\$16.82	\$35,000
5	Alaska	\$16.39	\$34,100
14	ARIZONA	\$15.31	\$31,800

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The table below provides a comparison of wages for Dental Assistants by industry for the Greater Phoenix MSA (2005). As shown, the sector accounting for the largest employment (ambulatory health care services) generally pays as much or more than other sectors.

Wages by Industry: Greater Phoenix MSA	Rounded Employment	Mean Wage	10th Percentile Wage	25th Percentile Wage	Median Wage	75th Percentile Wage	90th Percentile Wage
Ambulatory Health Care Services	3,570	\$15.60	\$10.54	\$13.51	\$15.86	\$18.54	\$20.99
Hospitals	NR	\$11.95	\$8.72	\$10.17	\$12.08	\$13.97	\$16.00
Public Administration	50	\$14.56	\$11.54	\$12.79	\$14.62	\$16.28	\$17.73

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

EMPLOYMENT

As shown in the table below, this occupation has a projected 70% growth over 10 years (between 2003 and 2013) for the Greater Phoenix MSA. There is an average projected 343 job openings each year, comprised of 254 new jobs and 98 positions vacated by individuals leaving the field (due to retirement, death, career changes, or other reasons).

	10-YEAR CHANGE			AVERAGE ANNUAL		
	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings	Growth	Separations
United States	2004	2014				
Dental Assistants	267,400	381,700	43%	18,910	n/a	n/a
Arizona	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings	Growth	Separations
	2002	2012				
Dental Assistants	5,280	8,980	70%	520	n/a	n/a
Greater Phoenix MSA	Employment		Percent Change	Job Openings	Growth	Separations
	2003	2013				
Dental Assistants	3,508	5,959	70%	343	245	98

Job Openings refers to the average annual job openings due to growth and net replacement.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

An additional source of information regarding this occupation can be provided by analysis of employer survey data collected for the Maricopa County Community Colleges by the ERISS Corporation in 2004. As shown, the ERISS survey data shows a projected

1-year growth rate of -1%, which is markedly lower than the average of 7% per year reflected by the BLS data above. However, the ERISS data could be considered more indicative of the true trend, as it asks employers only to project 1 year out, and also interviewed more local employers than the BLS survey.

Additionally, the ERISS data provides an indicator of turnover for this occupation, which is reported to be 8%. This is moderate for occupations within the Health Services industry.

ERISS Occupational Survey Data (2004)			
Greater Phoenix MSA	Growth	Turnover	Demand
Dental Assistants	-1.0%	8.0%	8.0%

Source: 2004 ERISS occupational survey

Comparison of employment projections for top five regions for Dental Assistants

As shown in the table below, the State of Arizona ranks first in terms of projected 10-year growth for this occupation between 2002 and 2012 (70%).

RANK	Location	Employment		Percent Change
		2002	2012	
1	ARIZONA	5,280	8,980	70%
2	Georgia	4,630	7,440	61%
3	California	42,700	67,100	57%
3	Idaho	1,330	2,090	57%
4	Tennessee	5,380	8,410	56%
5	Nevada	1,860	2,840	53%
5	North Carolina	5,890	9,010	53%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Geo-Location Overlay of Employers with 10 or More Employees that Potentially Employ Occupation (n = 150)

